EPA SUPERFUND UPDATE – HURRICANE HARVEY

Highlands Acid Pits – Groundwater

Post-Hurricane Harvey conditions of groundwater at Highlands Acid Pit is consistent with historical site conditions that existed before the hurricane made landfall.

On September 10,2017 groundwater was collected and analyzed for volatile organic compounds and semi-volatile compounds to evaluate the potential effects from Hurricane Harvey. No semi-volatile compounds were detected in groundwater. Benzene was the only volatile organic compound at 156 µg/L. The sample results for benzene are from the middle aquifer at the site and are consistent with historic data. Analytical results from the middle aquifer are known to exceed the Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) and action levels. Ongoing groundwater monitoring, semiannual sampling, and five-year review are conducted. The site remedy is operating as intended, and the remedy will be protective of human health and the environment in the long term provided operation and maintenance activities, including the groundwater monitoring program.

The 3.3-acre Highland Acid Pit site is located in Highlands in Harris County, Texas, on a peninsula in the San Jacinto River 10-year floodplain. Early in the 1950s, the area received an unknown quantity of industrial waste sludge, believed to be spent sulfuric acid, from oil and gas refining processes. The waste disposal activities contaminated soil and groundwater with hazardous chemicals. Following cleanup, operation and maintenance activities and monitoring have been ongoing.

The next site evaluation will be during the Superfund Five-Year Review. EPA is responsible for reviewing Superfund remedial actions at least every five years where hazardous substances, pollutants or contaminants will remain on site above levels that allow for unlimited use and unrestricted exposure. CERCLA also requires that EPA report to Congress regarding these sites. A Superfund Five-Year Review Report to Congress is prepared each fiscal year.